



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Farm and Foreign
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Farm
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Agency

Taos County FSA Office
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February 3, 2014

Ms. Darlene J. Vigil
Taos County Assessor
105 Albright Street, Suite A
Taos, New Mexico 87571

Dear Ms. Vigil:

Please find this letter as related to your Office's letter and livestock report drafted by Erica Apodaca January 10th, 2014. Please also find the Taos News Article related to the long reach effects of many Agricultural producers in the County losing their Ag classification status.

The Taos USDA FSA County Committee would like to express its concern that the Assessor's office should choose this time to enforce the non-Ag classifications as we enter into our fourth year of extreme drought conditions. Many of our farmers and ranchers have been forced to significantly reduce herd numbers or temporarily sell out due to the lack of forage and historically high feed prices to mitigate the drought. Most of these producers shall seek to rebuild their herds once we receive enough precipitation to sustain some grass, forage growth.

We are sure that you understand that the Agricultural producers in Taos County not only contribute to the viability, sustainability of Ag production in Northern New Mexico but that it's much more important than that, these Ag producers continue a rich legacy of tradition and historical values deeply embedded in the roots of most families in Northern New Mexico, primarily Hispanic small operators.

Producers have indeed expressed concern that without the Ag exemption many producers may indeed be forced to sell lands that have belonged to their family for generations. Once sold these lands could be lost to agriculture forever and forevermore change the face of Taos County as we know it.

The Committee understands that those properties that clearly don't meet the definition of Ag land clearly need the corrected determination, i.e. the 8 acre pasture turned into a trailer park. The Committee would just ask that the Assessor's office find the means to some leniency wherein producers have had to reduce production due multiple years' drought. Entering into another year of consecutive year of drought is much worse than the original drought year as the results are cumulative. It does neither the cattle nor the land good to continue to run where the grass cannot sustain them. The grass stands need some time to recover pending the needed precipitation.

Most sincerely, on behalf the Taos FSA County Committee

Aaron Eichwald, County Vice-Chairman



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